

He Didn't Mean It by dont_touch_my_cheetos

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Angst with a Happy Ending, Boys Kissing, Comfort, F/M, Fluff, M/M, Mike is a pure bean, Richie Tozier Loves Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier is a Little Shit, also some Benvenly, and also Stenbrough, but also a badass

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Summary:

Richie says something awful to Eddie to cover up his feelings, but he has no idea that Eddie reciprocates those feelings. Richie figures his shit out eventually though and comes to the realization that he loves Eddie Kaspbrak.

(I don't usually write in 1st person but I was told to practice for a creative writing class.)

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

I don't typically read or write in the first person, but I need the practice for a class and I'm pretty proud of this piece. I hope you enjoy this piece!

I didn't know I could forgive someone before they actually apologized. Richie hadn't said he was sorry, but I didn't know what I would've have said if he had. I think he felt sorry, but goddamn, that son of a bitch had too much pride.

"Eddie, you don't deserve his friendship. If he's too stubborn to even apologize, don't bother reaching out to him." I thought about Beverly's words all the time.

It's not like I could've avoided Richie. He never left the Losers Club. If he left, the others would have asked questions. They would've figured out what I was only brave enough to tell Bev. The thing was, I wanted to reach out. I wanted to sit down with him in his room next to a pile of comic books with yellowing pages. I would've asked him, "did you really mean it?" and he would've replied, "Of course not, Eddie- Spaghetti."

Then, I would've laughed and chastised him for the nickname that he so frequently used. Things would be so normal. I wanted that.

But Beverly said he didn't deserve my friendship. She'd been cold to him, so he obviously knew I told her everything. Yet he didn't seem pissed like I thought he would be. He seemed remorseful, but he'd tried to hide it. I could see right through him and he knew it.

It's crazier, though, because no one else could see it. Not even Ben could see how his girlfriend had developed a hatred for someone who used to be her best friend. Someone she used to take her smoke breaks with under the bleachers. Richie just disappeared from her life with no explanation (Beverly knows what to keep confidential) and Ben didn't seem to fucking notice.

Bill, Stan, and Mike are always there physically, but I don't think they could really see anything but each other. It's not even romantic. Their eyes just skim over everything as if everything in their world is just peachy. Why wouldn't it be? They continued to casually invite me to things but don't seem to notice when I never show up. I'm not sure if I'm the one who's invisible or if maybe it's them.

Lunch is the hardest. I think that eventually, everything will be the way it was, but instead of inching closer, that day inches away. We all still sat together, but I felt like Richie's seat moved a little farther away each day. I hated it. Today was like every other.

"Eddie, are you listening?" Beverly nudged me with her elbow. I zoned out and blink away the glaze that hazed my eyesight.

"Sorry, what?" I asked.

"My house for movie night tomorrow," Bill said, shoving another chip into his mouth.

God, I hadn't been to movie night in forever. I gave Bill a nod. The bell rang almost immediately after and I headed to English with Bev on my heels.

"You know, you can still go to movie night and not have to interact with him. I said *he* didn't deserve your friendship but the rest of us haven't done anything, you know?" she stated. "They're starting to catch on."

I was shocked by this. "They're just now noticing?" I asked.

"When they ask why you aren't there, I make up some lie about your mom and germs or some shit," she explained.

It's a pretty good cover-up, but it doesn't dismiss their oblivion. How does someone not notice when Richie stops making "Eddie's mom jokes?"

"All I'm saying," Bev continued, "is that I think you should go to Bill's tomorrow. It's your choice, but I think it'll be a good idea. Who knows? Maybe if we both stop avoiding him, he'll finally apologize." I wish, but I doubted it.

Friday went by fast and that evening, I found myself actually listening to Bev. I missed movie night anyways. I didn't have to stay the night if I really didn't want to, but I didn't want to be that one person who doesn't.

I hopped into the car and started driving. It took Ma forever to come around and let me drive. She had a whole spiel about the dangers of driving that she would perform anytime I mentioned getting into a car.

I remembered the way without having to think about it too much, granted it'd only been about two months since I'd taken the route. When I finally pulled into Bill's driveway, I saw I was the last to arrive. Stan and Ben's new models were right in front of Mike's old but loved pick up truck, an old blue chevy with chipping paint. We used to set up the projector on his farm and pile blankets and pillows onto the truck bed. We laid in the old Ford together and watch whatever cringy movie we picked that week. The last time we did that, I laid next to Richie. I remember him falling asleep, reddish glasses drooping down his nose. It was one of the few silent moments we were blessed enough to experience when Richie was around. I remember carefully removing his glasses and folding them beside him. That had been a good night.

When I walked in, Bill immediately gets up and runs to the door.

"Eddie! It's been forever since you've come," he exclaimed. At any other moment, I could swear Richie would have said, "I could change that," but he's still in the living room.

"How'd you convince your mom to let you come?" he continued.

"I don't know, really. Guess she was just tired of me," I lied, finishing with a convincing giggle.

I followed Bill into the living room. There were people sprawled across every item of furniture. Ben and Beverly shared the loveseat, Mike had the recliner, Stan and Bill shared the couch as Richie inhabited the beanbag. I glanced at him but his eyes seemed to be focused on everything but me. Not even a, "hello." Bev probably gave him a scowl when she walked in. I couldn't do that. She was always

madder than I was.

I reached for a throw pillow and leaned against the coffee table. With a blanket, it's a pretty comfortable spot. Seating almost never changes. Most people are where they usually are, except me. I used to share the beanbag with Richie. Some nights he would place his arm around my shoulder as he made a corny joke. I would turn around so that he couldn't see the pink tint on my cheeks. He didn't care how his mindless actions made my heart flutter. He didn't feel anything.

When I eventually focused my attention on the television, I realized that whatever movie was playing was unfamiliar.

"Hey Bill, what movie is this?" I asked.

"Have you seriously never seen Back to the Future?" He responded, shocked.

I never watched the movie. Richie loved it. He went through a phase where he basically tried to imitate Marty McFly with everything he did. He started wearing those god awful vests and tried to skateboard, play the guitar, greased his hair back, and hit on every girl who walked by. The latter ended quickly after Bev gave him a good talking to.

We made Richie throw away all the hair products and vests, but he turned out to be a pretty decent skateboarder. On top of that, his guitar skills were somehow spectacular. His voice was compelling in an odd way that made you lean in to catch every word. His singing was kind of raspy, but he could carry a tune so well. His reputation as a total nerd continued to evaporate, but he still hung out with the Losers, so he never became fully popular.

Watching the movie, I realized that it's actually good. It was fun, but so, so weird. Marty was funny, but the plot line was interesting, to say the least. What producer decided to it would be okay for a high school boy to have sexual feelings for his mother in a PG movie? Yet I saw how the storyline was so compelling to Richie.

When the film finally finished, people began dispersing to put on pajamas and arrange sleeping bags. As I reached for my bag, I catch a

glimpse of Richie beckoning for Beverly. I made myself look busy but tuned out everything but what I could hear of their conversation.

“What do you want, asshole?” she whispered so that only he, and I, I suppose, could hear. It’s not like anyone else was listening anyways. Her eyes seemed to blaze when she looked at him. Richie and all of his height seemed to shrink under her gaze.

“I-I just want to talk real quick,” he whispered back, his confident demeanor diminishing. Bev looked like she was debating the idea of talking with him but in the end, nodded.

“Fine, what is it?” she demanded.

“Um, do you mind talking in the kitchen or somewhere slightly more private?” Richie seemed nervous. I’d rarely seen Richie nervous.

“Why?” Bev questioned, her naturally skeptical side showing.

“Please, Bev,” he pleaded. He must have convinced her because she followed him out of the living room.

I changed into a tee-shirt and sweatpants and wondered what the hell they left to discuss. Richie’s tone wasn’t his normal joke-y, immature tone. It was hard to categorize. Somber, maybe? Reminiscent, sincere? All very non-Richie-ish characteristics.

When they returned, Richie looked the same, but something was up with Bev. She was fidgeting and looked almost sympathetic with a contemplative look plastered on her freckled face. She was chewing on her bottom lip. Beverly was a confident soul if anything. She barely had any nervous ticks and she kept the few she did have very well hidden. So, whatever transpired must have put her in quite the predicament.

When Richie walked in the other direction, I ran up to Bev.

“What the fuck happened?” I asked. Bev looked confused and it made me nervous.

Bev shook her head. “Oh Eddie, I-I couldn’t tell you. I’m still trying to figure it out myself.”

Her response left my head spinning. I tried to question her farther, but she just squeezed my hand and walked away to stand with Ben. I could see Ben's lips moving and made out the words, "Are you okay?" Beverly nodded in response as he draped his arm across her shoulders.

I felt awful but I couldn't identify why. I looked down at my palm that Bev squeezed. I wanted to leave, to be away from all the people who seemed to radiate happiness that I didn't want to feel. Everyone was laughing, enjoying the company of their friends. The only person who didn't seem happy was Richie. He stood next to the losers and laughed lightly at whatever antics were being told, but it wasn't his real laugh. When Richie laughed, his eyes lit up and the sound was so bubbly. His freckles stood out brighter against his cheeks.

The more I listened to Richie's fake laugh and stared at Ben's arm wrapped around Bev and her head on his shoulder, the more nauseous I felt. I hurriedly tossed everything into my bag. I couldn't stay. I couldn't stand it. I headed towards the door.

"Wait, Eddie, where are you going? I thought you were spending the night," Ben said. Everyone turned towards me, confusion evident on their faces.

"Yeah-uh, I'm sorry. I have to leave. I feel kind of sick," I told them. I thought they would see right through the lie but they all looked sympathetic.

"Aw man, that sucks," Bill said sympathetically, " hope you feel better."

"Yeah, see you guys Monday," I waved, "Bye."

"Bye, Eds," Richie said quietly. Richie. He looked...sad. He looked sad as he simply waved. A basic gesture. He was sad that I'm leaving. I waved back.

When I put the key in the ignition, I'm not thinking about what I'm doing. I'm glad I knew the way home because I completely zoned out. All I could think about was that wave.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie notices Bev has been around Richie after telling Eddie to avoid him. He doesn't know what to think.

Notes for the Chapter:

This is a short chapter but I hope you like it! I've reviewed the story but if there are any mistakes, please comment so I can fix them.

"You're acting weird," Beverly blurted as we pushed our way through the crowded hall.

"No, I'm not," I replied bluntly. I didn't feel like having this conversation with her. My main focus was holding onto my textbooks as fellow high schoolers trampled down other students on their way to class.

"Eddie, what is going on? Was it something from movie night? Did I do something?"

"Jesus Bev, just let it go. Leave me alone."

"No, Eddie. There's something wrong and I hate seeing you upset."

That one hurt. Bev deserved to know. Honestly, Beverly deserved the world. I just couldn't bring myself to explain to her why I felt like the world might come crashing down at any moment. I took her hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Hey, I'll tell you later, nur I just can't right now. I got to go to math." She smiled back and turned to go to her next class. I headed to the one class I shared with Richie.

Richie had always been surprisingly good at math. He used to come over after school and do homework. I'd get stuck on a problem and he'd say, "oh, that's simple," and have the answer in a matter of seconds. His brain worked a mile a minute. He would deny it, but Richie Tozier was a total nerd.

When I got to class, Richie was his usual seat in the middle of the rows of desks. When I walked in, he looked up and met my gaze but averts his eyes back to his notebook. Something in my stomach flipped. The way his black curls flopped over his eyes as he looks up sent my insides into hysterics. The way his dark hazel eyes widened. I wanted him to look back up.

I sat a couple of rows away. Not close enough to the front to be called on a lot but not far enough in the back to earn the reputation of a careless student or a drug dealer.

I knew I should have been paying attention and copying the endless equations into my notebook, but I couldn't focus. I thought back to movie night and Richie and Bev's private conversation. I have no right to get into their personal business, but Beverly's behavior had me stressed out.

When the bell finally rang, I stared down at my blank paper. A math class wasted. As I was leaving, I noticed Richie packing his things painstakingly slowly as if he had somewhere he really didn't want to be. For a millisecond, his eyes met mine once more, but he immediately looked away again. When he looked at me, I expect him to look angry, even though I haven't done anything to warrant anger, but his eyes looked remorseful instead.

At the end of the school day, Bev was waiting for me by the bike rack. She usually rides home with Ben, so I was surprised to see her there.

The sun glinted off the key around her neck. She smiled and waved when she saw me approaching. I waved back, slightly confused.

“Hey, Kaspbrak,” she greeted me.

“Hey, Marsh...?” I said, but it comes out as more of a question than a statement.

“How was math?” she asked. She has no reason to ask about math class in particular, so I became even more confused than I was a moment ago. She doesn’t have the same class, nor does she know anyone in it besides Richie and I. Richie.

“It was fine, Bev. Look, I got to go-” I hopped on my bike but she stopped me.

“Wait- you’re still acting weird. You said you would tell me what’s going on.”

I’m taken back by her statement. She wanted me to tell her what’s going on when she’s obviously keeping something from me. Beverly must have thought I was a dumbass, talking to someone who used to be our best friend again all of a sudden and thinking I wouldn’t pick up on it.

I was about to ignore her question and start riding when I saw the cigarette in her hand. She used to smoke the goddamn things constantly. Her clothes would stench of the tobacco products. I nagged on her constantly, telling her they’d rot her teeth, but she insisted they’d be fine. She eventually quit when she and Ben started dating, but I like to think that she decided my advice was actually valid. Ben hates the smell of cigarettes.

Richie smoked when he’s nervous- a habit I greatly disapproved of. He’s the only person I knew who smoked and would willingly give Beverly Marsh a cig. Her old smoking break buddy. I couldn’t believe it. She had been with him today.

“Go the fuck away Bev,” I whispered, trying to sound threatening but coming off more like a kicked puppy. I placed my feet on the pedals and tried not to think about whatever she probably told him about me.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie seems to be coming around to his normal self while Bev is upset. Also, Richie is a Journey stan because he knows good music. However, Richie's seemingly good mood doesn't last. Eddie finds him having a panic attack in the bathroom.

Ben was standing next to the bike rack when I pulled up to the school the next morning. He waved, beckoning me towards him. I hopped off my bike and inserted it into the rusting bike rack.

“Hey Eddie,” Ben said, running a hand through his hair. Ben’s one of the sweetest people on the face of the planet. It was like he didn’t know how to be mean unless the situation was dire. He was understanding and typically soft-spoken. He was welcomed into the Losers Club as soon as he stumbled upon us at the Barrens. Even Richie teased him less than everyone else.

“What's going on?” I asked him.

“Well, Beverly’s been acting strange. She seemed kinda upset or pissed off last night. She was still in a bad mood this morning. I figured you would know what was up better than anyone else. Did she get into a fight with Greta or something? Do you know what happened?”

Ben was genuinely worried about his girlfriend and his tone wasn’t accusatory. It’s impossible to dislike him, which is what made lying to him feel so bad.

“Sorry, I don’t know what’s going on with her. Probably Greta,” I answered.

“Oh well. Thanks anyways, Eddie. I’ll ask her about Greta.” Ben waved goodbye as he left for homeroom.

Beverly was pissed at me. I hadn’t intended to make her so mad. I

was mad because it was obvious she'd been with Richie after telling me to keep my distance from him.

The weight on my shoulders from the dozen textbooks shoved in my bag reminds me that I needed to finish a French class assignment, so I headed to class as well.

Every class seemed to last for hours. The teacher's voice was like static that went in through one ear and out the other. Just like math class yesterday, my notebook pages remained blank. I felt overly relieved when lunch finally rolled around.

The table felt too chattery for the current mood. Beverly wouldn't look me in the eye but she didn't look angry. She just looked sad and remorseful, her vivid green eyes especially dull. Ben had her hand clasped with his, but she didn't look comforted.

Richie was in a better mood today than I'd seen him in days. I couldn't help but think this had something to do with Beverly. He was laughing, making jokes like he used to. Not with the same amount of over-confidence, but close. Watching him made me smile involuntarily. Something about Richie's old stature never failed to make grin.

"Dude, Journey is way better! Have you not heard Steve Perry's voice?" Richie exclaimed.

"I have," Bill retorted, "And he can't fucking sing."

Richie put the back of his hand on his forehead and fell back in fake theatrics. "You wound me, Billiam."

Bill threw his head back and laughed while Stan just rolled his eyes. "What do you think, Stan?" Bill asked.

"Aw, come on," I said, deciding to join the conversation. "You know all he listens to us Frank Sinatra." The whole table erupted into a fit of giggles.

"Good one Eddie," Richie said through laughter. I was taken aback by his compliment. Richie had barely talked to me at all over the last two months, much less complimented me. Something in my chest

swelled a little bit. The smile he flashed me only lasted a second, but it was long enough for me to wonder: what's gotten into him?

Chemistry class was the most hectic class in the school. I thought an AP class would be full of calm, dedicated students. Instead, a paper airplane grazed the side of my face as I stepped into the room.

“Sorry, Kaspbrak!” someone yelled.

The classroom was incredulously loud. A group of students was making a tower made of periodic table flashcards. Another group was disassembling an atom model and gluing the electrons to each other's faces.

I sat in my usual seat next to an absurdly tall kid named James. James seemed to be constantly sick. Every season was allergy season for him. He sneezed every five minutes. I hated sitting beside him. Assigned seats are a bitch.

AP chemistry made me regret chucking my fanny pack across the yard of the Neibolt House. Richie used to remind me that I didn't need it when I worry about the orange bottles of medication inside, but he's not here to do that.

“You don't need them, Eds,” he would remind me gently. I thought back to the weeks when he would help me wane off the plastic blue aspirator. I knew it wasn't necessary, but the habit stuck. It would still be in my back pocket now if it weren't for Richie.

I couldn't help but flinch when James sneezed in my direction for the fifth time since class began. He rubbed his nose and set his hand back on the desk. I inched my chair away subtly and tried to remind myself of the times when Richie would remark on how my germophobia had improved since Neibolt.

After class, I rushed to the bathroom to wash the James germs off my

hands. The bathroom by the drama room is always empty. People rarely entered the arts wing hallway that happened to be close to the chemistry room. Due to its lack of use, it was always cleaner and had plenty of soap in the soap dispensers.

I walked over to the sinks and pumped an over-generous amount of soap into my hands. When I turned the water off, I heard someone else enter. Nobody walked into the bathroom. I stopped and listened. I could hear fast-paced breathing and I turned around. The breathing turned into a choked sob as I walked towards the stalls.

“Richie?!”

The tall boy was hunched over, back against the wall. His mop of raven-colored hair bopped with each heave of his chest. His freckles stood out against the striking red of what I could see of his face.

I rushed over and immediately wrapped my arms around him on instinct. He tensed and I could feel his heart racing, beating out of his chest. He slowly looked up, eyes wide and tears streaming down his face.

It had been a while since I’d seen Richie having a panic attack as bad as this one. He was shaking as if the bathroom was the tundra. His breathing continued to increase in pace to the point where I was worried he’d pass out in a matter of seconds.

When Richie’s eyes met mine, he let out another mangled sob. I wrapped my arms around his tighter and this time he melted into the touch. All of our discrepancies from the past two months were forgotten. He buried his face in my chest and sobbed some more.

“Oh, Richie,” I whispered. I began combing my fingers through his dark curls, remembering how it relaxed him when we still hung out. His face moved closer to my shoulder, my shirt wet with his tears.

“Richie,” I said, I lifting his face so that his eyes meet mine, “Breathe with me.”

His pale face was splotchy and his steady stream of tears had yet to cease. I grabbed his hand, giving it a quick squeeze before placing it

over my chest. His face turned slightly redder and his unsteady breathing increased.

“No,” I told him, “match my breathing.”

I slowed my breathing, inhaling and exhaling exaggeratedly. I hoped he couldn't tell how fast my heart was beating.

I could tell he was trying. His shaky hand remained on my chest as he slowly but surely slowed down his rapid breaths. He lifted his face to meet my eyes again. His cheeks were sopping wet. I carefully wiped the newest stream of tears off his cheeks.

When Richie had calmed down considerably, I asked, “Rich, can you tell me what happened?”

His eyes widened and panic was evident on his face again.

“Don't worry, I won't tell the others about anything,” I comforted him.

Richie visibly relaxed and I began unconsciously rubbing his back. He would carefully rub his hand up and down my back when I used to have panic attacks in front of him. Richie doesn't answer my question. Not right away.

“Eddie- I,” he started, but he choked on the words.

I grabbed his hand to encourage him to continue.

“Eddie, I'm so sorry,” he said, a few slow tears still making their way down his cheek.

“Richie, you know you don't need to apologize for this. Everyone gets panic attacks sometimes, there's no need to be sorry for it.”

“No Eddie, you don't understand. I'm sorry- f-for everything.”

My chest swelled. I could feel tears welling up in my eyes, but I willed them to stop.

“Eds- Eddie,” Richie corrected himself. I missed the nickname. “I'm

so, so sorry. I hate this.”

“Hate sitting on the nasty bathroom floor?” I asked.

“No- well yes, but not what I meant. I hate being away from you. I hate how you’re always right there but so far away.”

There was no stopping the tears now. I squeezed Richie’s hand, wanting to say, “oh no, its okay Rich,” but Beverly’s voice rings in my ears. She would say, “its not okay, Eddie. Don’t pretend it’s okay.”

She’s right, it’s not okay. I cried for days assuming my closest friend was gone.

I remember Beverly finding me, comforting me immediately. She came through my window. At first, I thought she was Richie, coming back to apologize for the previous night.

Bev sat with me and I told her everything. The words flowed out effortlessly.

I told her how Richie had been over the night before. We had been doing what we always did: reading comics and listening to records.

We were just talking. He talked about girls who I was sure didn’t go to our school- maybe didn’t even exist. He asked me what girls I was into and I didn’t want to lie to him anymore. I couldn’t look into those huge hazel eyes and continue to lie to him. I thought this might be my best opportunity to tell him.

“I don’t really like any girls,” I told him.

“What are you, gay?” he asked, chuckling, but he stuttered a little on the word ‘gay’.

My face turned red. I looked down, avoiding his question. He looked up at me, eyes wide with shock.

“No- Eddie?” He hated me. I could feel his eyes on me, staring at me. I avoided his gaze.

Richie got up. He tugged his shoes on. I watched as he headed

towards my bedroom door. He never left through the door. He always left through the window.

As he left, I heard Richie say, “fucking faggot. I can’t believe I was friends with a fucking faggot,” not so discreetly. He sounded sullen. More sullen than angry.

I cried and cried after that. The tears wouldn’t run dry. I spilled the whole story to Beverly. She rushed to my side, enveloping me in a hug. Besides Richie, she was the only one who knew.

Now, Richie was apologizing and telling me he missed me. I wanted desperately to tell him, “don’t worry about it,” except I worried about it constantly. But, I’m not a liar so I tell him the truth.

“I miss being with you, too,” I tell him.

The corners of his mouth lift upward slightly. I feel kind of good, but desperately confused. Did he actually miss me? If he really felt bad, why did he tell me two months later?

Richie’s big, hazel eyes looked sincere. I stood up and headed towards the exit. I turned around, but Richie was still on the floor.

“Are you coming?” I asked. He nodded.

“Yeah, just give me a minute for my face to return to a normal color and not the color of Bill’s dick when he sees Stan.”

“Beep fucking beep, Richie,” I said, but couldn’t help but laugh. The old Richie that I love/hate was back.

“Wait, Eddie!” he stopped me again. “Can you meet me by the quarry sometime soon? I just want to talk. The bathroom floor really isn’t the best place for a sincere apology.”

I wanted to talk to him, but I was nervous. Things were happening too suddenly. Yet, he sounded nervous, too.

“Yeah, I want to talk. The quarry’s not a good place though. You know Ma won’t let me out without a detailed report of what I’m doing.”

“Where do you want to talk then?” he asked.

“You remember how to get through my window, right? 9:00.”

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie and Eddie have a talk.

Beverly stood out against the crowd of students making their way down the halls. Her red hair could be spotted from a mile away. She carried a certain stature that had people parting to let her through the dense pack of teenagers. I heard the key around her neck jangling as she approached my locker.

“Eddie,” she said in a sing-song voice.

“Hey Bev,” I said without looking up at her.

“I just wanted to talk to you after school. We-we need to talk about-”

“About what I said a couple of days ago?” I tried to keep the attitude out of my voice. I wasn’t mad at Bev or anything anymore. Richie used to jokingly tease me, saying my voice was permanently, naturally sassy.

“Yeah,” Bev said. “That.”

I turned around and placed my hands on her cheeks, squishing them.

“Oh Bev, you lovely, red-haired goddess,” I said. “I am sorry: 1. Because I told you to fuck off and 2. Because I cannot talk with you tonight.”

“Oh really?” she asks, although it came out all muffled with her cheeks being squished.

“Yes, so I must go home now.”

I started walking away after closing my locker. I could barely hear her say, “Wow, he finally decided to do it.”

“Wait, what?” I turned to face her.

“Nothing, Eddie my dear,” she smiled, blue eyes sparkling.

My room was always neat and organized. When Stan used to come over, which wasn't too often, he would tidy up my already clean room. Eventually, I began taking after him. Richie made sure to comment every time he came over on how Stan's OCD was contagious- a joke that I'm sure made Stan feel awful but he never said anything. Richie used to tease, saying, “loosen up, Eddie-Spaghetti.” Despite this, I still felt the need to make my room better, more familiar.

I went to the bookshelf and pulled out the yellowing comic books. Iron man was his favorite but he always said it was Thor. I took out the small record player, too.

The knock on the window sent a shock down my spine. I ran to the window that was always unlocked for times like these. I hadn't gotten back into the habit of locking it since Richie entered it nearly every night.

The window slid open with a popping sound, revealing a mass of black curls from the other side.

“Hey Richie,” I said, wondering when I suddenly became shy in front of my best friend.

Richie, very ungracefully, tumbled onto the floor. It was comforting to know that some things about him just never changed. His shoelaces were untied, trailing behind his red converse. He was wearing his favorite Led Zeppelin shirt that I bought him for his birthday earlier this year. It was well worn already but the graphic of one of their album covers was still as vibrant as ever.

His glasses fell off in the process of entering the room. I picked up the dark red frames and when I turned to give them back, I realized I'd forgotten what Richie looked like without them.

His freckles stood out more without the giant coke bottle frames covering up half his face. His eyes were brighter without being dilated by the glass they hid behind.

“Thank Eds,” he said, taking back his glasses while flashing a class Richie grin.

I smiled back and gestured to the beanbag. He flopped down in a most theatrical fashion. I rolled my eyes at his familiar act, taking the desk chair.

“You came to talk and not just take advantage of my awesome bean bag, right?” I chuckled.

Richie nodded. The expression on his face was confident but he was picking at his cuticles. I knew all his nervous ticks inside and out.

“Yeah, I need to actually apologize, and not while crying on the bathroom floor,” he said. “And don’t worry, I really mean it.”

“I’m not worried,” I retaliate.

“Tell that to your foot. You always tap your foot when you’re worried.” I forgot that he knew all my nervous ticks, too. I immediately stopped.

“Um-anyway, I’m really, truly sorry, Eddie,” Richie began. “I feel so awful. I shouldn’t have called you a fag, obviously. It was terrible of me. I regret everything I did that night.”

When he finished, I could see his eyes watering with true regret. My stomach felt like it was flipping inside out. He was really sorry.

“Richie, why did you say it?”

Now tears were slowly making their way down his face. It was rare to see Richie get emotional and I’d witnessed it twice in one day.

“I said it because...because I was scared. I-I didn’t want you to find out that I’m...I’m a fag, too.”

Richie looked defeated. I was shocked. I couldn’t believe the words

that he had just muttered. My eyes were wide and mouth hanging slightly opened. A near mirror image of the boy in front of me. Richie Tozier could not be gay.

“I’m gay, Eddie. I’m so sorry.”

I stood up and walked towards the beanbag He purposely avoided my eyes as the awkward silence enveloped us. I took his hand for the second time that day. Whatever boundaries were created during the two months apart were quickly being erased.

“Richie,” I said, “you said you were scared. Why were you scared? Why were you scared of me finding out if you knew I was gay, too?”

“Because it's fucking terrifying for anyone to know. I didn’t want Bowers to find out. If they knew I was gay, they’d probably be after you, too.”

I wouldn't deny that anyone knowing such a personal secret was terrifying, but he knew I wouldn't have told anyone. He wasn't scared of Bowers. That's not why he said he was scared.

“No, that's not true. I know that's not true. Richie, you don’t have to tell me, I won’t push you. Just don’t lie to me.”

Richie sighed. He looked me in the eye and I melted. I melted for this stupid, stupid boy.

“Bev will be so proud,” he muttered under his breath.

“What does Bev have to do with-” I started, but he cut me off.

“Eddie, I said that because I didn’t want you to know that I have a giant-ass crush on you.”

I immediately dropped his hand. My eyes widened. Richie looked terrified, his face a bright red. Yet, he continued.

“For years. For *years*, Eddie. My fucking god.” Richie was rambling now. His nerves were skyrocketing.

“Beep beep Richie,” I said to stop his constant stream of words.

“What?” he asked, hopelessly confused and conflicted.

I couldn’t think of an appropriate response, so I did the only thing seemingly possible.

I leaned in, capturing Richie’s lips on mine. Richie only hesitated for a moment before leaning in, his lips slightly chapped. He melted into the kiss, bringing his hands up to cup my face. My hands clutched his cotton t-shirt, fists on his chest. Goddamn, he was a good kisser.

When the need for oxygen eventually overcame passion, he pulled away. I could feel the blood rushing to my face. His hands were still resting on my cheek as he ran his thumb over my freckles.

“Eddie,” he whispered, a ghost of a smile playing on his lips. I smiled back. I missed his dumbass face and his clumsy hands on me. I missed his gorgeous, unruly curls and his strong arms that were wrapped around me now. I leaned into his embrace, resting my face in the crook of his neck.

“Richie,” I whispered back.

“You have no idea how long I’ve wanted to kiss you, Eddie Spaghetti.”

“Just because you had your tongue in my mouth doesn’t mean I will condone those nicknames.”

Richie let out an exaggerated gasp.

“You won’t let your boyfriend use pet names, Eds?”

“Boyfriends?” I asked, so scared of the unfamiliar term being addressed to me that I forgot to chastise him for the nickname.

“Is-is that okay?”

“More than okay,” I tell him, wrapping my arms around his neck. He leans down to meet my lips again. His arms snake under my shirt. Richie’s hands against my bare back felt so right. Being pressed against him satisfied every insecurity I’ve ever had.

Still, my mind was racing with all the what-ifs of dating Richie. Would we tell the other Losers? What is Bowers found out? Ma would have a heart attack if she found out I was dating a boy. Not to mention the fact that she considered Richie to be the male version of Beverly, who he still wrongly thought was dirty.

Despite my doubts, I couldn't deny I how safe I felt tucked in Richie's arms, listening to his heartbeat. I trusted this boy against my better judgment. I was one of the few people he'd ever confided in. He trusted me too.

"Richie, are you staying the night or are you headed back home?" I asked.

"Oh, anxious are you? We just got together, but I'd gladly go break the news to your mom if you want to do it tonight." I turned around to face him with a look of disgust, but I know he can see through it.

"Seriously, Rich."

"What do you want me to do?" he asked, looking down at me.

Ma would kill me if she found out Richie had stayed, but I definitely didn't want him to leave.

"I want you to stay, but you'll have to be super quiet and sneak out fast in the morning. Ma can't know you're here."

I set Richie up for another perfect immature joke, but he seemed to understand that now wasn't the time.

"Don't you still have some pajamas here from last time?" I asked.

Richie used to stay over so often that he'd keep clothes in my dresser, even when he started sneaking through the window. I dug through the closet looking for Richie's clothes. I found a pair of sweatpants and a worn Led Zeppelin t-shirt.

"Will these do?" I ask him. He nodded, grabbing the clothes with a smile and headed to the bathroom to change. I grabbed my own pajamas and flopped backward on the bed, feeling happier than I had in a while. Goddamn, this boy would be the end of me.

I hear the door shut and look up just to make sure it was Richie and not Ma. The sweatpants rise an inch or two higher than they should.

“Did you manage to grow even taller since you last slept over or were they always too small?” I laugh.

“They still fit!” Richie defended.

“Well? Don’t just stand there in your too-short sweatpants,” I said, patting the bed next to me. He grinned, flopping backward and landing next to me with a thud. I rolled my eyes and leaned over to peck him on the cheek. Richie wrapped his arms around me, pulling me into his side.

As much as I wanted to stay awake with the freckled boy, I couldn’t help stifling a yawn.

“Tired already?” Richie asked.

“How are you not?”

“I just don’t sleep,” he responded.

“I have no idea if you’re joking or not,” I say, looking up at him with concern.

“Sleep is a social construct, Eddie my dear.”

“That is one hundred percent incorrect,” I tell him, slapping his arm gently for the nickname that he’d been using even before today.

“Anyways,” I continue, “you’re gonna have to sleep tonight. There’s school tomorrow and I’m not staying up all night.”

I wriggled out of Richie’s grasp, much to his dismay, and maneuvered myself under the sheets. Richie followed suit, immediately latching onto me again. He was like an octopus with limbs everywhere.

“I forgot how much comfier your bed is than mine,” he mumbled

“Yeah, that’s because I actually wash my sheets,” I said, smirking.
“Now go to sleep.”

Richie was a naturally restless person. His ADHD prevented him from staying still. Sleeping in the same bed and getting him to calm down was a difficult chore.

“Richie, stop moving,” I whispered.

“Sorry,” he whispered back, but I knew he was incapable of actually keeping still.

I rolled over from the position I was in: sleeping on my side with Richie’s long arms wrapped around my waist, to on top of him with my head resting on his chest. Our legs were intertwined and were my hands made their way up to his dark curls.

“There, now you can’t move.”

He smiles into my hair.

“Goodnight, Eddie.”

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

This time, Eddie talks with Bev.

“God Richie, you look like a hot mess,” Bev said at lunch the next day, but there’s a small, knowing smile playing across her lips.

Richie flashed me a subtle smile. He rushed out the window and biked home late in the morning. His shirt was on backward, but it wasn’t too obvious with his Hawaiian button-up on. His hair looked more unkempt than usual but his smile was bright as ever.

“Alarm didn’t go off,” he said.

“Eddie, what’s got you so happy?” Ben asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Yeah, you’ve been smiling non-stop,” Stan said. I hadn’t realized. Beverly leaned over and nudged me with her shoulder.

“Yeah, Eds,” she said, “what put you in such a good mood?”

I shrug and glance over at Richie who was currently making Bill cackle by trying to balance a spoon on his nose.

I see Bev at her locker in the morning.

“Did you still need to talk?” I asked her.

“Um, yeah.” She smiled at me. “But about something different.”

“Alright, are you free tonight? My house or yours?”

Beverly considers this before replying, “Dads gonna be home early tonight. Can’t have anyone over.”

I nodded, understanding the regulations of Bev’s home life. There had been multiple times when Bev, like Richie, had to sneak out and climb through my window when her father got too drunk.

“You know my window is always unlocked,” I told her. Her smile widens and she was just about to say something when the bell interrupts her.

“Catch you later, Eddie Spaghetti,” she said, waving.

“Hey!” Richie was poisoning her brain.

The school day couldn’t be over fast enough. My mind was wandering all day. I couldn’t stop thinking about what Beverly wanted to talk about.

When the last bell rang, I rushed home, thankful that Ma wasn’t going to be home until late. I quickly threw comic books that were scattered across the room into desks drawers and on top of the bookshelf. Bev wouldn’t care if my room was a mess but I wanted to rid the area of any evidence of Richie’s visit. I didn’t know if I wanted anyone to know yet and I had no idea how Richie felt.

Before long, I heard Bev knocking.

“Hey, welcome to casa de Kaspbrak,” I said as Bev slowly climbs through the window, much more gracefully than Richie.

“Isn’t that Richie’s old joke?” she asked.

“Not anymore.”

Bev plopped down on the beanbag, scanning the room.

“What?” I asked, confused. “Does it look different than the last time

you were here?" Bev hums, shaking her head.

"Just kinda thought it would be a bit of a mess. Comic books and cassette tapes everywhere, I don't know."

My heart starts beating a little faster when she said that. What does she know?

"Um, why would you think that?" I asked nervously.

"Oh, I just thought Richie was over last night," she said casually.

My eyes widen. She laughs and I feel the blood rush to my cheeks.

"Eddie, calm down," Bev chuckles.

"But wait- how did you know? Are you stalking me?" I asked sarcastically, narrowing my eyes.

"Yes, Eddie. I'm obviously stalking you," Bev said, laughing out loud this time. "But in all seriousness, Richie's been running his mouth about how cute he thinks you are for years now. That poor boy's been waiting forever to tell you. He told me last week that he'd finally do it after he told me why he said what he said. So, when you told me yesterday that you would be busy last night, I assumed Richie was finally going to shoot his shot."

My heart fluttered as she spoke. He's liked me all these years? I kept my gaze focused on my hands in my lap. I couldn't hide my smile, though. All the nights I cried because I thought Richie would hate me if he figured out what ran through my head when he looked at me. They were nothing but worthless insecurities now.

"Is that what you and Richie were talking about a movie night?" I asked. Bev nodded.

"That's when he told me why he called you a fag. He cried, explaining to me how much he regretted it."

"I think I've loved him forever," I whisper but loud enough for Beverly to hear.

“He has, too. I don’t blame you for not telling me about your feelings, but if you had, this drama would have been over so much sooner.”

“God, I wish I had,” I laughed. “One more question though. How did the others not notice what was going on?” Beverly grabbed my hand and smiled.

“Oh honey,” she drawled. “His crush on you was so obvious. They assumed you guys had started dating and were trying desperately to keep it a secret.”

I facepalmed. I can’t believe I was so oblivious.

“You didn’t correct them?” I asked with mock exasperation. Beverly put her hands up defensively.

“I thought that was better than them knowing what Richie said. They were all too polite to say anything.”

“What? You guys managed to keep Stan’s bluntness under control? How’d you manage that?” I couldn’t believe it.

“Trust me, it wasn’t easy,” Bev smiles, blue eyes vivid even in my rooms dim lighting.

“Come here.” Bev opened her arms wide and I return the hug gratefully. “You oblivious, precious idiot.”

We stayed like that for a couple of minutes, basking in the calming silence. Beverly knew. Of course, she knew.

Pretty soon, our evening came to a close. Beverly had to leave, but she stopped right before she opened the window.

“Hey Eddie,” she says. “Instead of regular movie night, we’re headed to Mike’s tomorrow. He’s got the projector all set up, so we’ll be projecting the movie onto the side of the barn. Bring blankets and pillows and such.”

I nodded and waved at her, watching her old chucks step onto the branch outside the window. She waved back and soon, she was gone.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Some sweet Reddie fluff.

“What time do we need to be at Mike’s?” Ben asked at lunch the next day. If only Mike wasn’t homeschooled, communication would be so much easier.

“He said seven,” Stan inputted, rolling his eyes at Richie as he snorts cafeteria pudding.

All day, Richie and I had been trying to avoid direct eye contact, hoping nobody would be suspicious. It proved to be a difficult task. I don’t know what about his pudding-snorting self sends my heart into hysterics. It seemed he had the same problem. I’d look up and see his wide grin directed at me. He’d catch my eyes and look away with a blush.

Richie makes a hacking sound, suddenly choking on his chocolate pudding.

“Dear God, Richie!” I said, jumping up from my seat. “Are you okay?”

“Jesus Christ, Eddie. He’s fine, he’s just being an idiot,” Stan said with another eye roll. Stan had an infinite amount of eye rolls.

I looked back at Richie who didn’t seem fazed by Stan’s comment, but I worried about how he let every comment roll off his back. There was no way nothing ever bothered him.

“Alright buddy, give me this,” Beverly said to Richie, carefully confiscating his pudding cup.

Lunch went by quicker after Richie got all his devices of distraction taken away. After the bell rang, he ran off to AP statistics. I often forgot what a nerd that boy was.

As I left the school building, headed for the parking lot, I spotted Richie leaning against my car.

“Hey, what’s going on?” I asked. Richie almost always rode home with Stan or skated. Richie stood up straighter, rolling up the sleeves of his flannel.

“Stan was my ride but he had to bale. He and Bill are headed straight for the library to study and I’ve been banned from the library for the next three months.”

“Oh Richie, how did you manage that?” I asked but take it back. “Actually, I don’t want to know.”

“Yeah, good idea. But anyway, can I get a ride?” I grabbed his hand, rubbing my thumb up and down his smooth skin and nodded.

“Course Rich. Hop in.”

Richie tumbles into the passenger seat. His father certainly made enough to buy him a car, being a dentist and all. However, his mother refused. It's fair, I wouldn't get into a car that Richie was driving. The poor boy's severe ADHD made him basically incapable of driving without getting distracted and rear-ending someone considering Maggie also refused to buy him medication.

“So, Bill and Stan are studying together now?” I asked.

“Yeah. Stan’s canceled plans with me three times in the past two weeks to hang out with Bill.”

I forgot how much time Richie and Stan spent together. They were friends before the Losers Club officially formed before I’d even met Richie. It surprised me when I first found out. To anyone who didn’t know the two, it would seem that Stan despised the raven-haired boy. I reached over the console to grab his hand again.

“Why the hell would he do that?” I asked him.

“Are you serious, Eddie Spaghetti?” Richie exclaimed.

“What do you mean?”

“Stan is totally trying to get into Bill’s pants. They’re basically dating already.

My hands slipped on the steering wheel. I guess I was too preoccupied with my own infatuation to notice the two. I turned to Richie, shocked.

“They’re what?” I said, probably louder than I should have.

“You couldn’t tell?” he asked, equally as surprised.

The more I looked back, the more I can kind of see where Richie was coming from. They did spend a lot of time together, sitting closer at lunch. Yet, I hadn’t been particularly observant. I really was too focused on the boy beside me to care all that much about my friend’s romantic lives.

“I see it,” I told him, “But how did they get together?” Richie’s shit-eating grin crossed his face.

“You didn’t,” I said.

“I did!” he exclaims excitedly.

“How?”

“You know Stan tells me everything. He’s been crushing on Billiam for so long. It just took a little push. I saw Bill’s heart eyes for Stan I was able to convince Bill to ask him out. Those little meerkats are just keeping it a secret.”

“Meerkats?” I laugh,

“It’s an accurate description!” Richie squealed, getting defensive. His eyes shine as he laughs and I grip the steering wheel tighter.

“My boyfriends a matchmaker. Who woulda’ thought,” I said, giggling. “Want me to drop you off at yours or you want to hang at my house until we need to leave for Mike’s?”

"Mrs. K is probably missing this beautiful face," he said, squishing his cheeks. I slapped his arm away as he laughed.

"Beep beep Richie."

Richie starts rummaging around in the glove box for a tape, head bopping to Another Brick in the Wall. I used to describe my music taste as classy: classic rock like the Beatles, the Monkees, the Rolling Stones, sometimes even Elton John. When Richie heard my tapes, he let out a screech and ran home to get some of his own. He accepted the Beatles, saying that he was a man of culture, but decided that he needed to show me some "real rock." He brought Pink Floyd, AC/DC, Bowie, Queen. It was good. I liked his rock music, but I could never *not* sing along to Rocketman- never.

The first couple of songs ended just as we pulled into my driveway.

"Alright, 'Chee. Ma's probably asleep in the living room, so stay quiet when you go in."

"Aw, but I know Mrs. K is just dying to see me, Eds."

I grabbed his hand, choosing to ignore his last statement. I peeked into the living room to make sure Ma was really asleep before dragging Richie up the stairs.

"This may be the first time in like a year that I've entered your room through the door and not the window," he said.

"I know, how boring," I deadpanned, grinning at him. I close the door quietly as Richie jumped onto the bean bag.

"So Eddie- Spaghetti, you ready for movie night?" he asked. He was just trying to make conversation, but I didn't feel like talking anymore now that I was somewhere adequate to put my lips on his.

"Hold that thought," I whispered.

I walked over to the beanbag, sitting down beside him. His arm instantly wrapped around my shoulders, bringing me closer to his side. I tilted my head up, giving him access to my lips. He leans down, perfectly capturing my lips in his.

Apparently Richie discovered chapstick between then and the first time we kissed. He gently placed his hands on my waist. I feel my skin tingle as he rubs up and down my side, cold hands shaking under my shirt.

I gasped at the feeling and hold him tighter, letting my hands slip down to rest around his shoulders, hands clasped behind his neck.

Richie began chewing on my bottom lip, sucking gently. I can't help the sound that comes out, but it only encourages Richie. I gave him what he wanted. I open my mouth for him to slip his tongue into. He explored, letting out a moan. I felt his hands tighten around my hips. His fingers slipped right below the waistband of my shorts, but I knew he wouldn't adventure farther. Not yet.

I pulled away slowly. His lips disconnect from mine with a slight pop. Richie doesn't let go, though. His arms wrapped around my back, pulling me impossibly closer until my cheek is resting on his chest. I didn't realize how much I needed someone to be there-be there just to hold me. I loved the soft feeling of his Ramone's tee-shirt against my cheek. I let my fingers slide up to his hair, twirling the soft curls around and around.

"What time do we need to leave?" he whispered softly.

"We have time, don't worry. Just stay here a moment longer."

7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

Movie night ends perfectly. More fluff.

“Grab those blankets from the back, would ya, ‘Chee?” I asked Richie as we pulled into the rocky driveway of the Hanlon farm.

I spotted most of our friends by the barn. Bill and Mike struggled to set up the projector while Beverly spread out the few blankets that were brought so far.

Richie tumbled out of the passenger seat, almost tripping on his too-big Converse. I popped the trunk and he grabbed the throw blankets and pillows we hastily threw into the trunk.

“H-hey E-eddie, Richie!” Bill said, dropping the projector to wave at us, causing Mike to scramble to catch it. Stan walked over to help us carry over the blankets.

“About time you guys showed up,” Stan mumbled. “Now we’re just waiting on Ben.”

Mike and Bill finally set up the projector facing the barn. Stan patted the blanket next to him and Bill gave him a subtle smile before sitting down. Stan slowly clasped the other boy’s hand, holding it under the blanket to hide it.

Richie laid down and I followed suit, resting my head on his shoulder. Ben eventually arrived, settling in beside Bev.

“Alright boys and gal, Star Wars time,” Mike announced as he inserted the movie into the projector.

“Again?” Bill groaned, but immediately shut up when Stan’s face turned bright red. Stan was a diehard Star Wars fan.

During the intro and opening credits, I relaxed more into Richie’s

side. He nuzzled his face into my hair. I turned around and gently pecked him on the cheek.

“Do you want them to know yet?” Richie whispered, gesturing to our friends. “Should we tell them?”

“Don’t bother telling them. If you kiss me enough, they’ll figure it out on their own.” Richie laughed quietly and kissed my forehead. I looked over at our friends. They were all too consumed by the movie to notice Richie and me.

Eventually, the movie ends. I hadn’t really been paying attention. I’d seen Star War enough times anyways. Mike sat up, stretching. I rolled over so that I wasn’t basically on top of Richie anymore.

“It’s not too late, I can pull out the truck and trailer,” Mike said.

About a year ago, Mike’s grandfather bought a new trailer to attach to the back of the old Chevy truck so that there was more storage space than just the truck bed. Mike took the old trailer and refurbished it with the Losers Club in mind. Instead of just riding in the truck bed, we could all pile into the trailer with more space. Mike loaded it with all the blankets and pillows before hooking it up to the truck.

When we first saw it, we were hopelessly confused.

“Mike, it looks absolutely darling,” Richie said, using the British guy voice. “But what the hell is it for?”

“Cut out the accent, asshat,” I remember telling him. The British guy was always my least favorite. Stan slapped his arm but Mike just laughed, too polite to be affected by Richie’s antics.

“It’s like a hayride,” he said.

We all climbed in, Mike driving with Beverly and Ben in the front. The rest of us piled into the back with the blankets as Mike pulled the trucks out the barn.

The first time we went, Mike drove past the farm into the even more rural area outside of Derry. He wouldn’t tell us the destination, no

matter how much Richie complained. I didn't think he'd ever shut his mouth, but he seemed to have lost his voice as soon as Mike pulled to a stop.

The truck was parked right in front of a vast field. I hadn't realized how far we'd driven until I'd seen the open, hilly area. It was late enough for the stars to be perfectly visible in the cloudless sky.

Mike, Ben, and Bev hopped out of the truck to join us in the trailer. I remember the feeling: all of us crowded together, laughing from just being in each other's presence. Throwing pillows at each other. The many "beep beep Richies." Before that night, I had assumed I knew what it felt like to be perfectly happy, but nothing before that night could ever compete.

The consensus was unanimous. Mike backed the truck out of the barn and we began tossing the blankets and pillows from the lawn into the trailer and truck bed. Mike climbed into the front seat of the truck.

"I'll ride up front with Mike," Bill announced, not wanting Mike to have to drive alone. Although he announced it to the group, he was really only looking at Stan, who nods.

I climbed onto the trailer, sitting up against a pile of pillows as the others followed. Richie laid down, knees pulled up ever so slightly and head resting in my lap. I looked down at his freckled face and smiled.

"I'm glad you to see you guys together, I bet hiding it was torture," Ben said sweetly, not meaning any harm. At first, I was confused and Richie seemed even more confused than I. Beverly shot me a look and then I remembered.

"Wait- back?" Richie started to say, but I cut him off.

"Thanks, Ben," I said, recalling how Bev said everyone though we were only trying to hide our relationship. I gave Richie an "I'll explain later" glance and he decides not to question it.

The ride was loud but cheerful. We listened to Stan ramble about his

most recent time going bird watching. Bill would've loved to see how his face lit up as he talked. Richie kept quiet, but it was obvious he'd zoned out ages ago.

"Eddie-Spaghetti," he whispered, poking my cheek.

"What?" I whispered back as I leaned down to kiss him on his temple relishing the feeling that this is something I was allowed to do now.

"If you go swimming in a pool full of milk, do you see pitch black or pitch white?"

"What the fuck, Richard?" Stan asked, a look of humor and disgust on his face as he stopped his bird-watching rant.

Mike pulled up to the field as Ben tried his best to logically respond to Richie's randomness.

"Alright, dickwad. Get up," I told Richie, lifting him off my lap.

We walk uphill after hill before coming to the big, open clearing. It was a beautiful sight, one I didn't think I could ever get used to. The moon lit up every inch of the clearing and fireflies fluttered everywhere. The Losers dispersed to entertain themselves. Beverly was teaching Bill how to do a cartwheel. Stan was telling Ben and Mike what kind of owl he saw near the trees on the edge of the field.

Richie walked up behind me, wrapping his lanky arms around my shoulders and leaning up against my back.

"Hey Eddie, look up," he whispered to me. I do, but I don't understand what he wants me to see.

"What is it, Rich?"

"See the Big Dipper?" he asked, pointing somewhere in its supposed general direction.

I kept looking, following Richie's gaze until I saw a couple of stars that somewhat resembles what I thought the Big Dipper looked like.

"The stars sure are beautiful," I murmured, leaning into his chest.

“You know what else is beautiful?” he whispered back, kissing the top of my head.

“What?”

“Your mom,” he deadpanned.

“Richie!”

“I’m kidding, Eds! Totally kidding. Mrs. K may be jealous of our relationship, but it’s worth it for you.”

That was about the closest to a compliment I’d ever received from Richie. I rolled my eyes at him, which seemed to be happening more and more often, but I turn around to kiss his cheek anyways. His hands travel up to my hair as mine wrap around his waist. My face rests in the crook of his neck, inhaling the scent of his cologne and leaving kisses along his collarbone. He hugs me tighter, if possible.

“Eddie Spaghetti,” he whispered in my ear.

“Don’t call me that, asshole,” I said back, but there was no real bite behind the words.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I said back.

The night passed suspended in the overwhelming feeling of happiness. There wasn’t a moment that wasn’t filled with someone’s laughter or cheerful chatter. It seemed that nothing could ever be this perfect.

Notes for the Chapter:

This is the end! I hope you enjoyed the story. Let me know if you guys would like a continuation.